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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6117
INFO RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2933
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0431
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0142
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7123
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5218
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3780
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1002
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3852
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2934
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7709
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5386
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2075
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS, EUR/NB, CA/FPP, INL/HSTC, INR/NESA, S/CT
MCC FOR S. GROFF, D. TETER, D. NASSIRY AND E. BURKE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [CPAS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKAN AMBASSADOR TO U.S. ALLEGES LTTE SOLD NORWEGIAN
PASSPORTS TO TERRORIST GROUPS

1. (SBU) Summary: Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the United States, Bernard Goonetilleke, stated in a May 17 radio interview that 130,000 Norwegian passports were in the hands of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who were selling them to Middle Eastern terrorist groups. On May 21, the Norwegian Embassy Foreign Ministry denied the allegations. The source of Goonetilleke's disinformation was an Oslo-based organization, Norwegians Against Terrorism (NAT), headed by Falk Rovik, a convicted murderer who has spent time in both prison and a mental asylum. Post has no information on an alleged LTTE connection to Middle Eastern terrorists and believes that Rovik's claims are false. End Summary.

2. (SBU) On May 17, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the United States, Bernard Goonetilleke, stated in an interview with Washington Post radio that 130,000 Norwegian passports were in the hands of the LTTE, who were selling them to members of Middle Eastern terrorist groups actively opposed to the United States. Ambassador Goonetilleke stated that 700 Norwegian passports were being sold in Thailand, and that the LTTE had stolen 130,000 passports and were selling them to Al-Qaeda. The source of his information was an Oslo-based organization, Norwegians Against Terrorism, headed by a convicted murderer, Falk Rovik, who has spent time in both prison and a mental asylum.

3. (SBU) Embassy Colombo contacted Norwegian Embassy political officer and spokesman Erik Nurnberg, who confirmed that the allegations were baseless. He alerted the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which issued a press release concerning the missing passport story, denying most of the facts stated in Ambassador Goonetilleke's interview. The statement from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs directly refuted Goonetilleke's statement regarding the 700 passports in Thailand and said the allegations had "no basis in reality."

4. (SBU) Rovik's story, echoed by Ambassador Goonetilleke, appears to stem from an incident in Norway where a policeman sold 9

passports to a Norwegian Tamil. The passports were reported as stolen, and the policeman was prosecuted. The figure of 130,000 passports is the total number of Norwegian passports reported lost by their owners over the past 20 years. This appears to be roughly in line with stolen passport statistics for other European and developed countries.

15. (SBU) The Norwegian police have no information indicating the LTTE or Al Qaeda are in possession of missing Norwegian passports. Post also has no information on the alleged LTTE-Al Qaeda connection and believes that Rovik's claims are completely false. The source of the disinformation is a virulently anti-Norwegian website hosted by Rovik's organization Norwegians Against Terror (NAT), which alleges terrorist connections between Al Qaeda, the LTTE, Saddam Hussein and King Harald of Norway. It also encourages people around the world to boycott Norwegian products. NAT's address is a post office box in Oslo. Rovik, NAT's leader (and possibly only member) has visited Sri Lanka often and is a favorite of the Sinhalese nationalist media.

16. (SBU) However, the Sri Lankan government GSL and Sinhalese nationalist organizations have heartily applauded NAT's campaign. Thousands of Tamils who have emigrated from Sri Lanka live in Norway and other western countries and actively lobby their governments for assistance to Tamils living in Sri Lanka. The GSL has lately been signaling its disapproval of Norway's role as facilitator, implying that Norway is biased toward the LTTE. President Mahinda Rajapaksa has recently made public statements against countries that the GSL considers to be soft on terrorism, but failed to name specific countries. The Defense Ministry has recently twice denied permission for Norwegian peace facilitators to travel to the de facto LTTE capital of Kilinochchi for routine discussions with the

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Tigers. Moreover, the government defense spokesman has publicly mused recently about "reviewing" the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: At best, the Government of Sri Lanka has fallen into the trap of believing and redisseminating propaganda that originated from a particularly scurrilous source. However, the reality may not be so benign. Rovik's many trips to Sri Lanka and his ties to Sinhalese extremist parties close to the government raise questions about whether this is in fact part of a ham-handed disinformation campaign intended to isolate Norway from the rest of the international community.

BLAKE